

Gilger, Wendell Holmes.

As was the fashion then and long afterward young Holmes was first sent to a dame's school, but, from 19 to 15 years of age, he was at a man's school at Cambridgeport. He records in his autobiographical memoranda: "My first schoolmaster, William Biglow, was a man of peculiar character. He was a good-natured man, a humorist, a punster. I do not remember being the subject of any reproof or discipline at that school, although I do not doubt I deserved it, for I was an inveterate wanderer at every school I attended."

On March 30, 1893, Holmes left New York for the packed Philadelphia, and on April 29 arrived in Portsmouth, where, as he naively reported, "we passed ourselves off for Englishmen." In a few days he went over to Havre, and there resumed his professional life. Some of his letters are alloted to his traveling companions' letters to Europe, but many of the letters are devoted to his family. The travel photographer candidly remarks, are not especially interesting, being largely taken up with descriptions of the common sights. Holmes had not been a fortnight in Paris before he wrote his mother, "I am quite bored with the sights and almost naturalized," and in a short time he asserted that he was "quite absorbed" in his study. He seems to have taken his work and his pleasure in the right proportions as early as half after 7 every morning he would get up, and at 10 o'clock he would go out for his walk, and at 11 o'clock he breakfasted. He breakfasted at 11, and in the afternoon. Then came dinner, either at a pension for the purpose of learning French, or at some cafe, with a knot of fellow students. He was not a student, but must have been wandering and pleasing with. After dinner came the evening, though he does not seem to have given much time to this form of entertainment. "I must own," he writes, "that I feel rather golly in not having attended the lectures, and must have, first, because I don't betray a want of taste, and secondly, because it argues a neglect of the best means of learning the language." He pleads, as if in exculpation, that, at the opera house, he has heard some famous singers and seen some famous plays, and that the most interesting occurrences follow the references to these experiences: "It was busy enough during the time I spent in Paris, but saw little outside lectures and lecture rooms. If I had known how much literature would occupy my time in later years, I might have taken pains to meet the historians. Thiers and Taine, and Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Beranger, George Sand, Comte, and others of the celebrities in politics, letters, and science. I saw the great actors, singers, and dancers, Mlle. Mathilde, the great comedians, Labrousse, Labrousse, Tamburini, Griet, and Tagliani, and the great Jodelat was the particular star at the Palais Royal. I remember Arago, a man of singularly fine presence, Polson, the mathematician. But I never went out hunting, as I might have done." In his letter to his mother, he says, "I am saving Holmes' letters the deduction that I have been truly devoted to the study of his profession, and that his interest in it increased as he advanced in knowledge. Often such a passage as this occurs: "I am more and more attached to my profession, and I am more and more convinced, and more and more determined to do what I can to give my own country one citizen more than others who has profited somewhat by the advantages offered him in Europe. And let me tell you of this, they have not all done so, who might have done so, and I am sure that I am not alone with an equality or a moderate superiority to those they left behind them, and partly because they found other things pleasanter than following hospitals and lectures and autopsies." Looking back, however, from the standpoint of the travel photographer, it is not surprising that that much of his "time in Paris was lost in ill-directed study. Still I gained the same familiarity with disease which the keeper of a menagerie does with the wild beasts he tames and handles. I then learned the uncertainties of medical observation, and the impossibility of making an accurate history of a case, and the impossibility of having charge of watches that he cannot open; he must make the best guess he can make, and it is fair to say that the exploration of the interior of the human body has reached a degree of perfection that I have not dreamed of at the time when I was a student." In the fall of 1894, Holmes and some of his

VII.

Having returned to Boston, he invested himself in May, 1830, with professional respectability by joining the Massachusetts Medical Society. But, well-beloved and ambitious as he was, it is acknowledged by the biographer that brilliant career in the way of practice not only did not begin with him early, but never developed at all. On this point Mr. Morse remarks: "He built up a very fair business if the word is permissible, but hardly more. For this there were many reasons. Probably he did not have the opportunity, and he was not so much conversant to his taste as he had anticipated. It has been told that he never could become indifferent to the painful scenes of the sick room, and, of course, when friends and neighbors came to him, he would find his heart softened." Mr. Holmes himself.

very nice young women in my eye, and it is not to be means impossible that another summer or so may see my name among the hymeneal vials. I do, indeed, congratulate you on changing your isolated condition into the beneficent state of duality. The very moment one feels that he is going to get old, and that he has almost I take to be from twenty-five to thirty in most cases—he must not wait any longer; he first era of his life is fairly closed, and he may live half his bright days over again if 'woman's pure kiss, sweet and long' be his. I am glad, my dear old friend, that you wait till the next epoch of his life begins there is a great danger lest he marry his wife as a lucky buy, a horse, sensibly, shrewdly, and merely as a convenience in his domestic operations. Such are my sentiments on this matter, and I am glad you go to the other extreme I would rather repeat, "The certain age."

Dr. Holmes referred, the age of 31, found him married to Amelia Lee Jackson, a daughter of Charles Jackson of Boston, an Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and a descendant of the great John Adams. Dr. Holmes she was a ideal wife—a comrade, the most delightful, a helpmate the most useful, whose abilities seem to have been arranged by happy foresight for the express purpose of supplying his wants. She smoothed his way in the numerous annoyances from his path, and did for him, as an angel would do for a mortal, those things which otherwise he would have to do himself, or have done with difficulty for himself; she hedged him carefully about and protected him from distractions, and bores, and annoyances. In a word, she took care of him, and gave him every the fullest and freest opportunity to be always at his best, always able to do his work amid cheerful surroundings. In an intimate acquaintance with the family enables the biographer to aver that "she contented immensely to his success. He adds that if it were not for the things she did for him, he might have been a failure."

Dr. Holmes without the daily routine with such cheerful reference to the occupations and the devotion of her husband, she often gave herself to sacrifice as, no doubt, she did—she always was, and so such amiable fact that the fact is not easily easily forgotten. Her devotion was employed with no disquieting sense of what it had cost her. We are assured, moreover, that, "while she eschewed the idea of leaving wit or literary and critical capacity, yet, she was so good of fact, she had rare humor and a sense of the ludicrous, that she was not only counted upon for good service if, on any occasion, these qualities could bring assistance to the Doctor—and, as to this, no man probably knows."

The children of this marriage were three: the eldest, Oliver Wendell, first from the family, succeeded to Lieutenant-Colonel in the Civil War, and is now an Associate Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. The second child, a daughter named after her mother, married Dr. Turner Sargent, after whose death she married Dr. Sargent, and in 1874 she died in Italy in Europe. She died in 1889, having been married five years before by the third child, Edward Jackson, who had inherited not a little of his father's wit and humor. It appears that Edward Holmes left a son, who alone represents the name in the third generation.

IX.

It was in 1847 that Dr. Holmes received the appointment of Parkman Professor of Anatomy and Physiology in the medical school of Harvard University. The variety of his functions was such that he occupied not a professor's chair but a wooden stool. In 1874 the same chair, but of a wooden stool, was so manifested that a separate professorship was established for physiology, and Dr. Holmes thereafter had charge only of anatomy. This position was of only moderate importance, and he held for only a few years. His

born at Charlstown, was condemned by
H. W. Doane, and by the *Astorian* to
in a scrap of paper, with a lead pen-
cil. Holmes rapidly shaped the stanza
headed "Old Ironsides," and sent them to
the *Daily Advertiser* of Boston. The verses travelled
fast through the newspaper press of the
country. They gave the ship a pride which
the people of the United States had never
before. Holmes before he was twenty-two years of age,
touching the place of Holmes among verse
makers the present biographer writes with
good sense and admirable tact. He de-
clares that Dr. Holmes was a man of great
society was a genuine poet, and is frank enough
to say that Dr. Holmes, according to a defini-
tion which is quoted, would not have order-
ed, Dr. Holmes to a giddy attitude on Parnassus.
That Dr. Holmes was always intelligent to
the point of not sending the question whether his
flatt him. Perhaps he ought to be classed
above Moore or Locker, and bracketed
with Frazer. For, as Mr. Morse points out,
"The lyre was never far away from him
in his happiest moods. His melody was abso-
lutely perfect. He was a consummate master
of rhythm in rhythm and language." It is also true
that "in mail respects his literary skill defied
unfading. His perfect taste could never be
deceived." The proof is "The Last Leaf."
That Dr. Holmes was easily chief among the
poets of the century, and of the country, is
everybody will echo the biographer's ejacula-
tion, "What a Poet Laureate he would have
made!" It is not true, as Whittier has said,
that "Occasional Poems" are fatal to any poet.
For Dr. Holmes, For, as Mr. Morse reminds
us, "The Poet Laureate, and Poet of the
country, and, he might have added, of the Isles of
the world, were occasional."

The biographer reminds us that during the
early years of Holmes's married life, and, for
that matter, up to the middle of the fifties, the
poet was in the country, and not in the city,
and New York in particular, was in its
prime. Nowadays, some third-rate person is
"managed" about the country; but then, the
best men of the time, such as Emerson, James
Russell Lowell, Wendell Phillips, Theodore
Wright, and others, gave the country their
thoughts upon the Lowell platform. Their
lectures were fashionable as well as popu-
lar; everybody went to them. Among the lec-
turers Dr. Holmes was a favorite with the
country and had no lack of engagements.
The biographer writes that "the poet
that he did was the delivery of a course
of twelve lectures on the English poets
before the Lowell Institute. Physically, he had
some disadvantages upon a first introduction.
His voice was not good in sound, but it
was very expressive, so was his manner
of speaking with art and lively change to each
subject of thought. By this kind of work
he undoubtedly obtained a desired addition to
his income, but it is pointed out by Mr. Morse
that "Dr. Holmes was not so much interested
in the literary business as the Autocrat."
Obviously the remunerativeness of his touring about
New England towns and villages had a disrepu-
table side.

XI.

Dr. Holmes was but two years distant from the
beginning of the half century, or five-hatched
century as he called it, when he was unexpectedly
called to resume the literary profession from which
he had resolutely shut himself off soon after
the death of his father. He was then in the
prime of his life, and the country was without a first-rate
purely literary periodical. The publishing
firm of Phillips, Sampson & Co. determined to
conduct the experiment which had failed in Pat-
erson's hands, and invited James Russell

The *prima crux* is the best. The second is even nearly as good; but, in the third squaring, the author has been too far from the mark. It was in the earlier part of the interval between "The Professor" and "The Poet at the Breakfast Table" that the novel called "Elsie Venner" appeared, bearing, at first, the title of "The Professor's Story." This was for many years, was widely read, although like many of Mr. Holmes' Headed Stories, it was open to the objection of being a novel with a purpose. The purpose was not so much to indicate the possibility of the pre-natal poisoning of a child, through its mother's being bitten by a snake, as to raise the question of hereditary influence, by assuming its possibility upon the moral responsibility of the recipient of the envenomed instincts. As a matter of fact, the author of "Elsie Venner" received letters from two men of character and position, who thought that the book, by describing similar cases in their families, and wondering how he had heard of them. In the opinion of orthodox New England, the fundamental position taken in "Elsie Venner" was proof of heresy. For "the imaginary subject of the novel," they obeyed her, but her will obeyed the mysterious ante-natal poisoning influence. There is, moreover, in the book a liberal-minded clergyman, in whose mouth the author put a number of heretical opinions. Dr. Holmes, in short, seemed to make it his business to show that the world was a little awider than the narrow line of more respectable authors. The book was really a cluster of instruments of torture fashioned by misguided human intellect. Half a dozen years later Dr. Holmes produced a second novel, "The Hound of the Baskin's," also moving along the line of more speculative fiction. One of the novel's heroine, Myrtle Hazard, was a simple one of hereditary, and did not involve an abnormal, not to say impossible, problem. In the judgment of the present biographer, the book far surpassed the former one, from a literary point of view. It was less weird and fantastic, it was also more artistic, as a picture of New England people at, or shortly before, the time when the book was written, notwithstanding that more graphic. It was a novel, and the book far surpassed the former one in third and fourth rank. "The Hound of the Baskin's" was then far past the creative age, and Elsie Venner shows the fact too plainly: "From Elsie Venner, with her mysteriously envenomed nature, to that absurd young man, Maurice Kira, it would not bear the sight of a young girl, because his heart was a mortal ailment." It is to fall from a balcony in his bachelord, the downward step was indeed a long one; and in "The Terror," and "The Wonder," and "The Boat Race," and "The Fire," and all the rest of it he apparatus, human and other, these won't do at all.

XIII.

In April, 1860, Dr. Holmes, being then 77 years old, started with his daughter, Mrs. Saccub, upon a trip to Europe. He had not been married since 1834. Yet it was only a brief visit that he made now, the history of which has been written by himself, under the title of "Our Hundred Days in Europe." The biographer remarks that this book has no literary pretensions, and that it is a mere record of the journey, and was extended to the author. Two years later, in March, 1888, Dr. Holmes began the series of papers which he christened "Over the Teacup." Truth and kindness are well combined in the papers, and the reader is not disappointed upon these compositions. "It would be idle to pretend that they are as good as the talk of the author; but they make very pleasant reading, with an abundant infusion of the old-time wit, wisdom, and humor. Indeed, the display of wit and humor is the chief feature of the

the Temple, ye thieves! On their backs fall his
blows, on the backs of the thieves and their agents.
He cleanses the temple with the lash; he whips
them out of the house of God."

in addition to the Hebrew Orphan

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